

PRESBYTERIAN BANNER & ADVOCATE.

Presbyterian Banner, Vol. V, No. 24.
Presbyterian Advocate, Vol. XIX, No. 19.

"ONE THING IS NEEDFUL:" "ONE THING HAVE I DESIRED OF THE LORD:" "THIS ONE THING I DO."

WHOLE NO. 232

DAVID MCKINNEY, Editor and Proprietor.

PUBLICATION OFFICE, GAZETTE BUILDING, FIFTH STREET, ABOVE SMITHFIELD, PITTSBURGH, PA.

Philadelphia, 27 South Tenth Street, below Chestnut

TERMS.—IN ADVANCE.

FOR THE WEEK ENDING SATURDAY, MARCH 7, 1857.

By Mail, or at the Office, \$1.50 per Year; {SEE PROSPECTUS.
Delivered in the City, 1.75

Original Poetry.

Praise for Redemption.

The Lord of life and light,
Steeped from his glory bright;
Angels beheld the sight

With wonder gaze:
Leaving his throne on high,
He laid his glory by
For sinful worms to die—

O, sing his praise!
Behold, while hellish foes
His glorious work oppose,
He all their malice knows:

Confounds their rage,
Breaks every vain design;
While truth and mercy shine,
With radiance all Divine,

From age to age.
The mighty work is done,
The great exalted won;
The regal incarnate Son

Ascended high,
Still pleads for us above,
With interceding love,
Till we from hence remove,

No more to die.
Lift up the heart and voice,
Angels and saints rejoice,
And make a joyful noise

Of sounding praise
To Him who rules on high,
In light and majesty;
To all eternity

His honors raise. Y. B.

February, 1857.

For the Presbyterian Banner and Advocate.

Rev. Dr. Buchanan, and the Vestiges.

The lovers of truth and Christianity have

ailed already, with delight, the appearance

of that part of the original work of Dr.

Buchanan, lately issued from the American

press, under the title of Modern Atheism:

the prestige of the author's name, his ag-

knowledged ability and learning, and the

nots that he is the successor of Chalmers in

the Chair of Theology, and one of the most

valuable leaders of the Free Church, will se-

gure for his work, in this country, an abun-

dant and successful circulation. That the

book will be well read, and do good ex-

actly, we have not the shadow of a doubt.

We must praise the author for the labor be-

stowed upon it, and award him deserved

thanks.

But just because of the considerations of

eminence here named, we fear that in sev-

eral respects the work will rather retard

an advance the interests of pure Theism,

particularly in the minds of those who, un-

accustomed to think for themselves, derive

their estimate of the various forms of Athe-

ism from the statements of others, whose

character commands their respect.

Detaching nothing, whatever, from either

the ability of the author, or usefulness of

the work, we still have this to object, viz:

That he has made what we regard a most un-

fortunate admission, in reference to one of

the most cunning, plausible, and dangerous

forms of materialistic Atheism, in modern

times. We refer, now, to Dr. B.'s treatment

of the Development Theory, or Hypothesis

of the Vestiges of Creation." The

admission is this, that the theory of the

Vestiges is not necessarily atheistic, but

may be consistent with a pure Theism, and

should time and science show its proba-

bility, or actually, even still it would not

consideration alone of the laws which are now

seen to govern it. And what is the logical

conclusion? Simply an Atheistic one, viz.,

that the entire creation is self-constituted, and

ever has been so, as far back as imagination

can conceive. But, to avoid this conclusion,

and entrap the unwary, the author assumes

a decidedly Theistic tone, just at this point.

We must not, says he, think of the system

"as a system independent or exclusive of

"Deity," neither confound "law" and "God"

together; but, by law, understand "a cer-

tain mode of God's working."—Vest., p. 191.

This sounds well, but would sound better if

consistent. God has never acted in any

other way, at any time, than the way in

which he now acts. "There is no evi-

dence," says the author, "that the Divine

will acted otherwise than in the usual order,

in the organic creation!"—Vest., p. 202.

We might "imagine" Deity to have cre-

ated all things by "separate and distinct

acts"; but we see that "he usually does not

do so."—Vest., p. 204. It is absurd to

think of so great a Being as God, employing

two modes of exerting his will or power.

In this manner, the author continually

speaks of God, as though the theory recog-

nized him in a Christian sense, while yet

the theory itself can do, or tries to do, with-

out him; and thus, many have been led, by

the studied sneer of the author, and his re-

peated disclaimer against Atheism, to regard

the theory itself as not incompatible with

pure Theism. To dispel this illusion, it

is sufficient to quote the words of the

author, in which, unapplied for himself, he

has let out, rather too plainly for his dis-

claimers, the secret fatalistic belief lurking

in his own bosom, and vainly concealed beneath

the art and adroitness of the theory itself.

Ponder well these words: "The inorganic

has one final comprehensive law, GRAVITA-

TION; the organic 'reins' in like manner on

one law, and that is DEVELOPMENT. Nor

may even these be, after all, twin; but only

branches of one still more comprehensive

law, the expression of that UNITY which

man's wit can scarcely separate from the

DEITY HIMSELF!"—Vest., p. 175. Here

it is, at last! This is the God of the

Vestiges!—nothing but Law in the abstract,

manifesting itself as Gravitation and De-

velopment, in the mundane system!—a mere,

low, sheer, bald, fatalistic, materialistic,

pantheistic, borrowed, exploded, heathenish

idea!—just not a whit better than the in-

stant ravings of Oken, the physico-philoso-

pher, who says, "God, in himself, is Grav-

ity!"—"God is a rotating globe!"—"God,

to become real, must appear under the form

of a sphere!"—the besuited and blasphemous

of a theoretic monstrosity which postulates

zero as its basis, and from this, seeks to ac-

count for everything!

Our space forbids us to quote more from

the Vestiges; but every one can find for

himself, at pages 100, 109, 223, the prin-

ciples of the theory distinctly laid down.

As to the Universal Fire-Mist, and shelling

off of spheres by the laws of matter, we

need say nothing at all. What we wish to

remark here, is that the theory, as advanced

in the Vestiges, teaches—

(1.) Creation by development, as opposed

to creation by separate omnipotent fiat, or

by miracle; and hence the denial of mira-

cles altogether.

(2.) The exclusion of a Personal God

from the work of creation.

(3.) The confounding of Law and God

together, notwithstanding the author's dis-

claimers.

(4.) The exclusion of a Personal God

from the providential control of the uni-

verse. All things proceed by themselves.

(5.) The denial of final causes; or what

are signified by marks of design, and hold-

ing that these marks are only the necessary

conditions of existence, caused by develop-

ment.

(6.) The artificial assumption of the eternity

of nebulous matter, and the laws of mo-

tion.

(7.) The derivation of the human race

from the inferior orders of animals, by regu-

lar progression upwards.

(8.) The derivation of the inferior ani-

mals, and all vegetable substances, from gra-

nulated cells, or ova.

(9.) The studied employment of Theistic

terms, as a lure, to entrap the reader, blind

to the nature, and conceal the author's dis-

claimers, and, in consequence, to lead the

reader to a false estimate of the theory, not

as a scientific hypothesis, but in its bearings

upon Natural Theology? He shall speak

for himself. Admitting that it is a mere

hypothesis, and that the progress of science

rather tends to invalidate than confirm it,

he yet adds the following language, "Even

were it admitted, either as a possible, or

probable, or certain explanation of the ori-

gin of the present planetary systems, it

would not necessarily destroy the evidence of

Theology, nor establish on its ruins the

cause of Atheism."—Mod. Ath., p. 53. And

further, "Even were it admitted as a possi-

ble, or still more, as a plausible explana-

tion of the origin of planets and astral sys-

tems, it would not serve to destroy, and

scarcely, if at all, to diminish the evidence

of Theism;" p. 60. And again, "Even were

the theory admitted, it would not destroy

the evidence of Theism; any more than the

propagation of planets and animals, under

the existing system, which, so far from ex-

cluding or impairing, serves rather to enhance

and illustrate the proof of creative wisdom and

power!"—38. This, we must say, is an

unfortunate admission; an admission, the

argumentative consequences of which Dr.

Buchanan surely could not have considered?

Is it possible, on even the supposition of the

reality, in truth, of such a theory, that "the

evidence of Theism" would not be destruc-

ted, nay, not even diminished? It cannot

be! For, what is "Theism?" It is not that

vague and cheerless creed which recognizes

nothing more than an active power in na-

ture, which may be identified, at one time,

with Motion, and at another, with Vital Force,

and at all times, with everything or anything

that suits the caprice or depravity of a vain

imagination. It is not that gold and iron-

bound naturalism, which acknowledges no

government but that of absolute and self-

regulating law, and beholds the universe, in

all its movements, and throughout all its de-

partments, as "only keeping step to the

Grand March of Eternal Fate. But it is

the demonstrated belief of the existence,

government, and Divine character of a liv-

ing, intelligent, moral, self-determining, self-

conscious and infinite God; distinct from all

his works, from all his laws, and the great,

independent, First Cause of all.

And what is the "evidence" of Theism?

It is the accumulated, and interwoven testi-

mony which is drawn from all the depart-

ments of nature, including the convictions

and voice of humanity; that which is drawn

from the necessities of reason, the demands

of the moral conscience, the marks of de-

sign found in the works of God, the very

existence of the universe, and the common

consent of mankind.

And can it be possible that a theory

which contradicts all these should not be es-

entially Atheistic? Can it be possible

that a theory which only is held back from

being a theory which virtually destroys

moral responsibility, by making "man and

brute organically one—a theory which

scoffs at the idea of final causes, and asserts

marks of design to be only necessary condi-

tions of existence—a theory which holds

to the absurdity of a self-created universe; in

opposition to a universe created by a First

Cause, above, beyond, and distinct from all

matter and motion—a theory which thus is

at war with the common voice and convic-

tions of humanity—can it be possible that

such a theory as this, contradicting every

single argument for a pure Theism, and

putting a new face on the whole ground

where all the evidences are wont to be gathered,

would not, in truth, necessarily de-

stroy the evidence of Theism, nor estab-

lish, on its ruins, the cause of Atheism?"

Would it still leave the evidence un-

diminished? Would it enhance it? Let

the uncircumcised Jew believe it; we will not!

We cannot. How is it possible that Theism

may be compatible with the basis of this

theory? What strange enchantment has

come over the mind of Dr. Buchanan: just

here! Theism says that God created the

world by the miracle of an Omnipotent fiat.

The Vestiges say he did no such thing!

Theism says that God is a personal Being, dis-

tinct from all his works, and all his laws.

The Vestiges say he is that Unity of Grav-

itation and Development which man's wit

cannot help but acknowledge! Theism says

God often interposes in a way different from

his ordinary working. The Vestiges say he

works only by a law, and that the progress of

science rather tends to invalidate than con-

firm it. Theism says that God created the

world by the miracle of an Omnipotent fiat.

The Vestiges say he did no such thing!

Theism says that God is a personal Being, dis-

tinct from all his works, and all his laws.

The Vestiges say he is that Unity of Grav-

itation and Development which man's wit

cannot help but acknowledge! Theism says

God often interposes in a way different from

his ordinary working. The Vestiges say he

works only by a law, and that the progress of

science rather tends to invalidate than con-

firm it. Theism says that God created the